



Pray, Hope, and Don't Worry



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Editors: Diane and Deacon Ron Allen

Stories from the Early Years

In July 1916, Father Paolino of Casacalenda, the superior of Our Lady of Grace monastery in San Giovanni Rotondo, traveled to the Capuchin monastery of St. Anne in Foggia in order to preach for the feast of St. Anne. Padre Pio lived at St. Anne's monastery at that time. During his visit, Father Paolino noticed the poor state of Padre Pio's health. He was extremely weak and frail and was unable to keep any food on his stomach. He was also suffering from the intense summer heat in Foggia.

Father Paolino invited Padre Pio to visit the Capuchin community in San Giovanni Rotondo, thinking that the change of climate might do him good and Padre Pio accepted the invitation with gratitude. At the time, Padre Pio was twenty-nine years old.

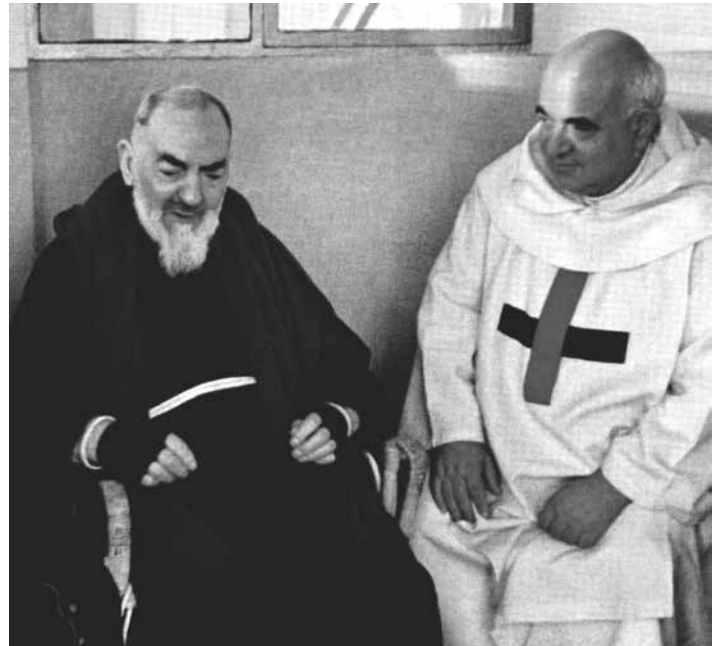
Our Lady of Grace monastery in San Giovanni Rotondo was one of the poorest and oldest monasteries that the Capuchins possessed. It was also one of the most isolated foundations in the province. A profound silence surrounded the old whitewashed monastery and the small church that was attached to it. In the distance, the clang of sheep bells could be heard as shepherds took their flocks to graze on the mountain just behind the monastery. People from the town rarely walked up the long dirt path to the top of the hill in order to attend Mass at Our Lady of Grace.

Padre Pio loved the solitude and peace that the monastery provided, saying to one of his confreres, "The silence here is beautiful." He also enjoyed the Capuchin community of priests and brothers who lived at Our Lady of Grace and they in turn enjoyed his company.

While in San Giovanni Rotondo, Padre Pio felt the beneficial effects of breathing the fresh mountain air. The higher altitude seemed to agree with him and the cooler climate was a welcome break from the hot weather in Foggia. In the eight days that Padre Pio spent there, his health showed a marked improvement.

When Padre Pio returned to Foggia, he asked for permission to make another trip to San Giovanni Rotondo. He received the permission from his superior and returned to the monastery of Our Lady of Grace in September 1916. He would live with the Capuchins there for the next fifty-two years, until his death in 1968.

The testimonies that follow are from two of Padre Pio's spiritual sons, Karl Klugkist and Nicola Pazienza. They met Padre Pio in the early years, not long after he was sent to Our Lady of Grace in San Giovanni Rotondo.



1965—Padre Pio with Father Michael Nardone, Minister General of the Trinitarian congregation. Karl Klugkist (feature story) was also a Trinitarian priest.

Karl Klugkist

The Russian prince, Karl Klugkist, was born in Kiev on March 25, 1871. After being exiled at the beginning of World War I, he moved to Italy. Karl, who was intelligent and well educated, was also a deeply spiritual man who was seeking a closer walk with the Lord.

In 1919, Karl learned of Padre Pio for the first time. A priest that Karl met in Foggia, Italy told him a few details of Padre Pio's life. The priest had known Padre Pio when Padre Pio was a fifteen-year-old student in the Capuchin novitiate in Morcone. The priest told Karl that all of the young aspirants in the novitiate loved Padre Pio. The priests and instructors at Morcone felt the same way. They admired him for his goodness and for his humility. According to the priest who spoke to Karl, "There was not a trace of evil in Brother Pio." Karl then read some articles in the newspaper about Padre Pio which further sparked his interest. He had a number of spiritual problems at the time and decided that it would be beneficial to go to San Giovanni Rotondo and speak to Padre Pio, asking for his counsel.

Karl had to wait two days to get a seat on the bus that traveled from Foggia to San Giovanni Rotondo. San Giovanni

Rotondo was a popular destination at the time as many people wanted to make their confession to Padre Pio and to attend his Mass. Karl was finally able to board the bus but it was anything but a comfortable journey. It took two hours for the rickety old bus to maneuver along the worst kind of roads enroute to the monastery of Our Lady of Grace. On the journey, Karl enjoyed looking out the window at the wide expanse of sky. He also enjoyed breathing the fresh mountain air which he found to be invigorating. However, the closer that he got to San Giovanni Rotondo, the more oppressive the landscape became. Scrub trees and rocks dotted the barren hills and the bleakness of the area made Karl feel depressed.

Karl was happy that he had been able to obtain a letter of introduction from the archbishop of Gaeta. The letter included a request that Karl be allowed to speak to Padre Pio. When he arrived at the monastery of Our Lady of Grace, he handed his letter to the first Capuchin he saw. The Capuchin instructed Karl to go through the monastery courtyard and then enter the church through the small door that was just beyond.

When Karl walked into the church, the first thing he noticed was a Capuchin priest who was hearing a man's confession in an open confessional. The penitent who knelt beside the priest appeared to be a local farmer. Slowly, the priest who was hearing the man's confession raised his head and looked up at Karl. Karl recognized the priest immediately. It was Padre Pio. For some reason, he had not expected to see him so soon after arriving at the monastery. Karl felt both surprised and afraid at the same time.

The corridor was packed with men waiting in line to make their confession to Padre Pio. At the other end of the corridor, there was another door. There were a number of men trying to force their way through the door so that they too could get in the confessional line. They were dressed in work clothes and they all appeared to be farmers from the local area. The noise and commotion that the men were making struck Karl as very irreverent. He quickly summed up the situation and realized that in order to talk to Padre Pio about what was on his mind, he would need to get in the confessional line.

Karl took his place in the line and began to prepare himself for his encounter with Padre Pio. From where he was standing in line, he could easily observe Padre Pio. Karl noticed that he remained immobile, with his arms either crossed or resting on the chair in front of him while he heard confessions. He kept his head lowered. As Karl looked at Padre Pio, he was awed by the beauty of his face. It was the most beautiful face that he

had ever seen. Karl got caught up in gazing at Padre Pio, and forgot all about making his preparation for confession.

Karl continued to stare at Padre Pio. Just before he gave absolution to the man who was in the confessional, Padre Pio recited a prayer in a low voice. Karl was close enough to hear the prayer. It sounded as though Padre Pio was speaking in another language, possibly an Asian language. Karl, who was fluent in a number of languages, could not identify the words.

Karl was still trying to focus his mind and prepare himself for confession. He let six men go in front of him in the line. All of a sudden, a man, thinking to do Karl favor, pushed him forward. Karl could postpone the encounter no longer. As he knelt before Padre Pio, he realized how truly unprepared he was to speak to him.

Padre Pio asked Karl when he had made his last confession. Karl told him that it had been the day before. "What sins have you committed since yesterday morning?" Padre Pio asked. Karl could not think of a single sin to confess. "I did not realize that I was going to have the opportunity to make my confession to you today," Karl explained. "I am not really prepared to do so. I came here hoping that I might be able to have a chat with you." The moment the words were out of his mouth, Karl regretted them. "That is impossible, Padre Pio answered. There are too many people waiting in line. I cannot allow people to have a chat with me. If you have something to tell me, you must tell it to me during confession."

Karl had written out the items that he wanted to discuss with Padre Pio on a piece of paper. He wished that he had the paper with him but unfortunately he had left it in his suitcase. He knew that he had to speak quickly. There was not a minute to waste. Karl then began to talk about himself, jumping from one period of his life to another in no particular order.

As Karl spoke, he continued to study Padre Pio. He felt the full impact of his holiness. He was convinced that he was in the presence of a true saint. Padre Pio was different from anyone that Karl had ever met. Spiritually, he seemed to be in a class all by himself. To Karl, he appeared like a bright light, shining in the midst of the world's darkness. He was direct and confident and there was no trace of false sweetness or sentimentality in his manner. At one point, Padre Pio blew on his hands several times, as if they were burning. He showed absolutely no self-consciousness in doing so.

Padre Pio listened with the greatest attention as Karl spoke, but he did not make eye contact with him. Because of it, Karl felt as though there was no personal relationship or personal connection between he and Padre Pio. Although Karl could have talked much longer, he finally stopped himself after about ten minutes, knowing that many others were waiting in line for the same opportunity.

When Karl finished speaking, Padre Pio said to him, "You are seeking the way but you have already found the way." He did not admonish or scold Karl. He did not tell him what course to take in his life. He did not try to influence his will. He left him completely free to make his own decision. Then he spoke in the mysterious language that Karl had heard before but could not identify. Before leaving the confessional, Karl kissed Padre Pio's hand. To his great surprise, he noticed a beautiful perfume coming from his hand.

During his visit to the monastery of Our Lady of Grace, Karl felt blessed to be able to attend Padre Pio's Mass. When

Padre Pio Devotions In San Diego

Every 1st Monday – Our Lady of the Rosary at State St. and Date St.

Every 3rd Monday – St. Anne's Church at Sicard St. and Irving Ave.

Holy Hour begins at 6:00 pm with Mass at 7:00 pm

To receive information about Padre Pio and a copy of the prayers that he said daily – **send 4 stamps and your address to:**

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Padre Pio came out of the sacristy, a great silence fell upon the congregation. At the Mass, Karl was seated close enough to the altar to see Padre Pio's hands very clearly. Padre Pio had removed his gloves and Karl saw a red circular mark about the size of a small coin in the middle of each of his hands. Karl noticed blood trickling from the wounds in his hands during the Consecration. Karl could not contain his emotions and upon receiving Holy Communion from Padre Pio, he began to weep.

After the Mass, two men approached Padre Pio and wanted to make their confession. Karl was standing nearby and noticed that Padre Pio would not agree to it. "Those men did not come here to make their confession," Padre Pio said.

During the days of his visit to Our Lady of Grace monastery, Karl occasionally walked to town. Whenever he did so, it always felt as though he had stepped back in time. Life at the monastery seemed to be far removed from the secular concerns and realities of the modern world. Padre Pio reminded him more of a prophet from the Middle Ages than a man of the twentieth century.

On one of his visits to town, Karl met the local state commissioner. The commissioner told Karl that he had first-hand knowledge regarding Padre Pio's gifts of reading hearts. One day, the commissioner went to the monastery to say goodbye to Padre Pio. He was going to be leaving his job in San Giovanni Rotondo in just a few days and another individual would soon be taking his place. Padre Pio smiled at the commissioner and said, "You are mistaken. You will not be leaving. You will stay in San Giovanni Rotondo for many months." The commissioner was surprised at Padre Pio's words. He did not want to disagree with him openly but he knew that Padre Pio was wrong. He had already received his transfer orders. However, a change was made at the last minute and the commissioner was asked to continue on with his job in San Giovanni Rotondo.

Karl enjoyed talking to the local citizens of San Giovanni Rotondo and he especially enjoyed the interesting stories they told him about Padre Pio. Karl learned that a blind woman had come to San Giovanni Rotondo from a long distance, hoping that her sight might be restored through contact with Padre Pio. When she finally had the opportunity to speak to Padre Pio, he said to her, "I cannot obtain the grace that you are asking for. But do not become discouraged, because you will soon be able to see." The woman went away in great distress. She told the priest who had accompanied her on her journey that she had given up all hope of ever being able to see again. She kept thinking of Padre Pio's words, "I cannot obtain the grace you are asking for." She believed that Padre Pio had simply tried to pacify her when he told her that she would soon be able to see. But less than two hours later, while on the trip home, the woman suddenly regained her vision.

When Karl returned to his home in Rome, he spent many hours in church, praying to the Lord for enlightenment. He was trying to discern the path that God might be calling him to follow. He was very happy that he had been able to speak to Padre Pio one last time before leaving San Giovanni Rotondo. Padre Pio told him that he would remember him in his prayers.

One day, when Karl was praying in front of the Blessed Sacrament, he saw two hands coming out of the tabernacle. The hands were holding a white habit with a red and blue cross on it. To his great surprise, the habit was coming toward

him. He thought that his mind might be playing tricks on him. He closed his eyes and then opened them again. He rubbed his eyes to make sure that he was actually seeing what he thought he was seeing. It was true. It was not his imagination. He saw the white habit clearly and then finally, it disappeared.

Karl shared the unusual experience with his confessor. His confessor told him that there was a religious congregation called the Trinitarians who wore a white habit with a red and blue cross. His confessor then introduced him to the superior of the Trinitarians. Karl noticed that the habit the superior was wearing was identical to the one he had seen in the vision.

Karl realized that God had answered his prayers and had given him a clear sign of the vocation that he was to follow. He asked for admittance and was accepted into the Trinitarian Religious Order in Rome. He made simple vows and took the name, Brother Pio. He was sent to Canada where he made his solemn vows in 1924. Upon his ordination to the priesthood, he took the name Father Pio of the Most Holy Trinity. He felt Padre Pio's loving presence helping him and guiding him in his priestly ministry. He always attributed the good that he was able to accomplish to Padre Pio's intercession. Karl Klugkist (Father Pio of the Most Holy Trinity) died in Halifax, Nova Scotia in 1948 after a long and fruitful ministry in the Lord's service.

I urge you to unite with me and draw near to Jesus with me, to receive his embrace and a kiss that sanctifies and saves us. . . Let us not cease then to kiss this divine Son in this way, for if these are the kisses we give him now, he himself will come to take us in his arms and give us the kiss of peace in the last sacraments at the hour of death.

—St. Pio of Pietrelcina

Nicola Pazienza

Nicola Pazienza was a deeply religious man who was admired for his strong faith and outstanding moral character. He loved to pray the Rosary and took care to have his Rosary with him at all times. His friend, Antonio Di Maggio, was very much aware of Nicola's deep piety. One day he suggested to Nicola that he make a trip to San Giovanni Rotondo. "There is a holy priest who has recently been transferred to the monastery of Our Lady of Grace," Antonio said. "His name is Padre Pio. Many people believe that he is a saint. Since you are so religious, I think you should go and see him."

Although Nicola had not heard of Padre Pio, he was familiar with Our Lady of Grace monastery. Regularly, the lay brothers from the monastery made their rounds in the small surrounding towns and villages, seeking any offerings of food or supplies that could be donated to the Capuchin community. They often knocked on Nicola's door. The lay brothers from St. Matthew of the Crucifix monastery did the same. Nicola always welcomed the lay brothers and did what he could to help them.

Nicola told his wife Theresa what Antonio had shared with him about Padre Pio. With all her heart, Theresa wanted her

Padre Pio Devotions Books

Pray, Hope, and Don't Worry: True Stories of Padre Pio Book I
Pray, Hope, and Don't Worry: True Stories of Padre Pio Book II
written by Diane Allen and available at amazon.com



A photo of Our Lady of Grace from the early days when pilgrims went to the monastery on horseback to see Padre Pio.

husband to visit San Giovanni Rotondo in order to meet Padre Pio. Nicola too, was very impressed by what Antonio had told him. He wanted to visit the saintly priest but at the time he could not make any plans to do so. He had his wheat harvest to tend to and it happened to be the time when the wheat needed to be winnowed.

Through years of experience, Nicola became very proficient in farm work. After the wheat was harvested, he would winnow it by throwing it upward into the breeze. The heavy wheat would fall back to the ground and the chaff would then be blown away by the wind. For many days he had waited, but unfortunately there had been no wind.

Just as Nicola finished speaking to his wife about Padre Pio, a gentle breeze began to blow. He was then able to winnow the wheat and afterward, he stored it in his loft. When the task was completed, he mounted his mule, and with his Rosary in his hand, he headed for San Giovanni Rotondo.

When Nicola arrived in San Giovanni Rotondo, he learned that in order to see Padre Pio, he would have to present either a letter of introduction or a special permit issued by the local police. Nicola had no idea that such paperwork was necessary. He had neither a letter of introduction nor a permit. He didn't think that he would have time to go to the police station and request a permit. His visit to Padre Pio's monastery had to be a short one because his family was waiting for him to return home that very day. He decided to take a chance and try to enter the monastery without a permit.

Nicola noticed that a guard was standing watch in front of Our Lady of Grace monastery, monitoring all of the visitors who approached. When the guard saw that Nicola did not have a permit or a letter, he told him that he would not be able to see Padre Pio. Nicola was very disappointed. He had been looking forward with great anticipation to meeting him. As Nicola was speaking to the guard, one of the Capuchins came out of the church and motioned to Nicola. "Padre Pio would like to see you," the Capuchin said to Nicola. Nicola was truly surprised. How could Padre Pio have possibly known that Nicola was standing outside, hoping to enter the monastery? They had never even met.

Nicola followed the Capuchin into the monastery and was soon standing in front of Padre Pio. "Oh, I see that you have arrived," Padre Pio said. "Who did you come with and how long did it take you to get here?" Padre Pio asked. Once again, Nicola was caught by surprise. It certainly seemed as though Padre Pio had been expecting him. "It took me three hours to get here on my mule," Nicola replied. "I came by myself." "You got here in half the time it would take an ordinary person to make the trip," Padre Pio said. "The reason why you made such good time is because you were accompanied by Jesus and Mary." Nicola was becoming more astonished by the minute. Finally, he asked Padre Pio if he would give him a blessing and he was happy to do so. Nicola then kissed Padre Pio's hand.

When Nicola returned to his home in the countryside, he told his wife Theresa all that had transpired. She was so amazed by her husband's words that she began to cry. For Nicola, the graces from the short visit to Padre Pio would long endure.

As time went by, Nicola became concerned about the attitude of several of his neighbors. For a reason that Nicola did not know, they seemed to harbor feelings of jealousy and resentment toward him and his family. One day, when Brother Bernardino, a Capuchin lay brother from Our Lady of Grace, visited his home, Nicola told him about his concerns. He asked Brother Bernardino to take a message to Padre Pio for him. "Please tell Padre Pio that I am very worried because of the hostility of some of my neighbors. I am afraid that they might try to harm my family." Brother Bernardino agreed to relay the message to Padre Pio.

The next time Brother Bernardino visited Nicola, he told him that he had spoken to Padre Pio about the situation. After he explained Nicola's problem to Padre Pio, Padre Pio replied, "Tell Nicola to carry on just as he always has and not to worry. The neighbors will do him no harm because the Virgin Mary and the Guardian Angel are always with him."

The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.

—Psalm 34:7